



[Govan Mbeki, 1910 - 2001](#)

Govan Mbeki

The main item today is Chapter 7, “The New Offensive: The ANC after 1949”, from “The Struggle for Liberation in South Africa” by Govan Mbeki, published in 1992 (**attached**).

Right at the beginning of this chapter Mbeki recalls the joint ANC/CPSA protest against the Suppression of Communism Act on May Day, 1950, and the massacre of 18 people on that day by the National Party regime that had come to power in 1948. This is something South Africans should always remember on the May Day holiday each year.

Consequent to this massacre, 26 June 1950 was observed with a stay-away as Freedom Day.

Freedom Day was observed again when the Defiance of Unjust Laws campaign was launched in 1952, and again in 1955 when the [Freedom Charter](#) was adopted on that date at the Congress of the People in Kliptown.

Note that 26 June, our original Freedom Day, having to do with the protests against the banning of the Communist Party - is not a Public Holiday in free South Africa. But 24 September was made a public “Heritage Day” holiday at the insistence of the Inkatha Freedom Party (see [here](#)).

Govan Mbeki concludes this chapter with a very good section on the “Africanists”, in terms of events in which he himself, as he records, was involved in a major capacity. The first occasion was when the Africanists tried to hi-jack the ANC leadership from the Treason Trialists, taking advantage of the fact that the latter were locked up.

“Black exclusivism,” says Mbeki, “presents a misguided solution”.

*“What has characterised all groups that claimed to be opposed to government policies - groups that either broke away from the ANC like the PAC, or others like the Liberal Party, Unity Movement (NEUM), **Inkatha** and Black Consciousness Movement - has been that instead*

*of opposing the government directly, **they have mounted campaigns aimed at thwarting those initiated by the ANC,***” writes Mbeki, and proceeds to tell the whole Sharpeville story, when 69 people were shot, fifty years ago, on 21 March 1960; and then he relates the immediate aftermath.

“At a meeting of the joint executives of the Congress Alliance in June 1961, the situation was reviewed and a decision was taken that in all future stay-at-homes, the possibility of the use of force could not be excluded,” writes Mbeki

The question of armed struggle was settled by the formation of Umkhonto we Sizwe on 16 December of that year, 1961. In tomorrow’s item we will see how O R Tambo, as the President-General of the ANC, reflected upon all this heritage in 1969, which was also the year of the ANC’s Morogoro Conference, where the original **“Strategy and Tactics”** document was adopted.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-texts: **[Govan Mbeki, The Struggle for Liberation in South Africa, 1992, Chapter 7.](#)**
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